

## 2011 Fond du Lac County Master Gardeners Accomplishment Report

We have 59 active members plus 11 members who took their training last spring but are not yet certified.

In 2011 we volunteered:           166.5 hours of Youth Education  
                                          302 hours of Community Education  
                                          3,544 hours of Support Service  
and participated in:               2,055 hours of Continuing Education

The Fond du Lac Master Gardener Volunteers meet the second Tuesday of the month. We are very active within the community, working with schools, the City of Fond du Lac, the UW Campus flower beds, the Fond du Lac County Fair, Veterans' parks, senior center, Prairie Fest, and other worthwhile projects.

Funding for all projects comes from our **annual plant sale**. The 2011 plant sale was held May 14<sup>th</sup>, the earliest we have offered. Dolores Braun and John Halle chaired the sale, with over 30 members contributing to make it a success. Dividing perennials for the sale, putting them in holding beds, and potting them is an ongoing project and in spring our Master Gardener Volunteers start annual flowers and vegetables from seed for the sale. The 2012 plant sale will be at UW-Fond du Lac on June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### Details of some of our 2011 activities are as follows:

The **Junior Master Gardener program**, under the leadership of Patty Percy, has been ongoing every year since 2002. We have a great base group of Master Gardeners who come in for the March, April and May sessions to help the kids plan the garden and participate in the planting. After school was out, kids from the Boys and Girls Club came weekly to help with garden maintenance and pick fresh produce which they prepared as a healthy snack. At one of their last meetings, they prepared a lunch and invited all the staff from UW-Extension. Later in summer, we helped the kids with the final harvest and took the produce to a local food pantry. When the kids are involved with the growth and care of the vegetables, they are much more willing to try the fresh produce that they pick. Many of them are amazed to see how the plants mature into vegetables like they see in the grocery stores. This program has now been moved into local schools and nature centers. Some teachers are utilizing gardening in their curriculum, while produce has also been used in the school's cafeteria and the pumpkins they grew were used as fall decorations in the school.

This year we took the Junior Master Gardeners on a field trip to Madison. First stop was the West Madison Research Station where they toured the grounds and saw the trial gardens with all the varieties of vegetables and flowers. Then we went to Olbrich Gardens where we toured the butterfly exhibit and some of the beautiful gardens.

Our annual garden conference, **Day in the Garden**, was held April 2, 2011. This event was chaired by Dolores Braun and Patty Percy. It featured six speakers, two breakout sessions, and had 150 attendees. It was our first time with a silent auction featuring items made and donated by our members. Also for the first time, vendors were invited which was very well received. Classes were informative as always and many door prizes were given. The 2012 Day in the Garden will be held on Saturday, March 31<sup>st</sup>.

A new relationship was developed with the **Fond du Lac Public Library** in spring of 2011. A request came from the library for Master Gardener Volunteers to provide help in designing and planting the current beds near the main entrance. Three of our members – Alice Dann, Vel Hynek and Julie Toshner - took on this project which included general spring clean-up, mulching the beds, looking for two urns to place near the main entrance and planting the urns with seasonal items several times a year. Our association helped with the funding of this project. The library staff would like to enter into further collaborative projects in the future. This spring they handed out fliers at the library for our plant sale and will do the same for future master gardener events.

Wendy Petak was in charge of a new project at the **Fond du Lac Humane Society**. The large flower bed in front of the shelter was completely filled with very well-rooted weeds and quack grass. Unable to use any pesticides due to shelter animals in the vicinity, she had to do extensive weeding. After that was completed, hardy perennials and grasses were planted. The garden is in a hot, dry location, so drought resistant varieties were chosen. In addition, low maintenance plants were selected to ensure that the garden is not time consuming for the shelter staff and volunteers. All of the plants and grasses have been thriving, and with continued weeding and heavy mulching, the garden looked great.

The first thing one sees upon entering **Pier Elementary School** is the courtyard garden. Returning Master Gardener Eileen Blackburn reports that the explosion of plant life is exceptional. This micro-climate cottage garden is perfect for showcasing the attributes of gardening. Bringing life back into the space has inspired everyone who sees it. The I-spy feature has wonderful benefits for the children in the school. They pay close attention to the garden while playing the game. Eileen rearranges the I-spy items weekly and adds new things regularly. The teachers integrate the game and garden into their classes as well.

Our 2011 **Horticulture Helpline** under Lin Morris' leadership was busy again this year with phone coverage three days per week from April 11 through September 30. Our team of seven Master Gardeners dealt with 118 phone calls and 37 emailed questions. The major issues for the growing season were disease and growing conditions. With the cold wet spring, the over-the-top heat in early summer, and the wet September, the major culprits were fungus, mold and mildew. Trees were especially hard hit this year with 38 of the calls directly relating to tree health. We also helped identify bugs, weeds and flowers, and answered inquiries on how to overwinter herbs and identify and control insects.

We again had a very busy summer at **Free Spirit Garden**. Kathy Erickson, Pat Birschbach and nine other Master Gardeners worked on planting and maintaining the annuals and perennials, trying to keep ahead of the weeds. They put four truck loads of wood chips over newspapers around the perennials. Also, with the grant we received from WMGA, they purchased some pavers which were used to edge the paths.

We gave two \$500 **scholarships** this year to college students studying horticulture and botany.

The **UW flower beds** were one of our major volunteer activities as always. The Down Under Shade Garden was renovated into a mass of beautiful flowers by mid-summer by Janet Tess and Gail Williams. A beautiful metal sculpture was added to Sunset flower bed, the largest on campus, under the leadership of Shirley Frieler.

The **Lamartine Veterans Memorial garden**, a project which was designed by Dolores Braun and two other Master Gardener Volunteers in 2009, has developed very well. Each year the perennials give a better show and the need for annuals decreases. Lamartine Township added a curb trim this year which really put the finishing touch on the garden.